

## Person County Natural Areas Inventory

### MOUNT TIRZAH SLOPES

**Site Number:** 37

**Size:** 484 acres

**Site Significance:** Regional

**Quadrangle:** Timberlake

**Ownership:** private

**SIGNIFICANT FEATURES:** This natural area, which is the highest point in southern Person County, contains some of the most extensive Dry Oak-Hickory Forests in the northeastern Piedmont. A good amount of Dry-Mesic Oak-Hickory Forest is also present. The State Significantly Rare Indian physic (*Gillenia stipulata*) occurs at two places in the natural area.

**LANDSCAPE RELATIONSHIPS:** The southern end of the site lies only 1/3-mile north of the northern edge of Red Mountain/Flat River Slopes. The Flat River Aquatic Habitat occurs within 1/2-mile to the east (Deep Creek) and to the southwest (Flat River). The Deep Creek Slopes and Deep Creek Mountain sites both lie about one mile to the northeast.

**SITE DESCRIPTION:** (A survey of this site was conducted in 1992 [Kelly and Murrell 1992, Smith et al. 1993]. Because recent aerial photos and visual inspection from both the western and eastern sides of the mountain showed that extensive hardwood forests were still present on the slopes of the site, no survey was conducted here because of the need to spend time conducting surveys on new sites. Thus, the NC NHP believes that the majority of the natural area as described in 1992 is still intact as of fall 2006.)

Mount Tirzah, at 815 feet elevation, is the highest of the monadnocks (small mountains) that occur in a cluster from central Granville County west and southwest into northern Durham County. It protrudes about 275 feet above the surrounding landscape. A road extends eastward from Moores Mill Road (SR 1737) to the summit of the monadnock, turning southward along the summit ridge to a fire tower and a handful of recently-built homes. The mountain is composed of felsic meta-volcanic rocks, and many boulders are scattered over the mountain. The generally acidic soil might have a few small areas of interbedded circumneutral soil, based on the presence of a few plant species.

The slopes of the mountain are vegetated in one of the more extensive Dry Oak-Hickory Forests in the Piedmont. White oak (*Quercus alba*) and mockernut hickory (*Carya alba*) dominate the canopy. A few of the many other canopy trees include chestnut oak (*Q. montana*) and pignut hickory (*C. glabra*). The understory is dominated by flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) and sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*). The shrub layer features considerable viburnum species – maple-leaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*), downy arrow-wood (*V. rafinesquianum*), and smooth black-haw (*V. prunifolium*). Other shrubs of note include fringe-tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*) and New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*). The herb layer is fairly rich for such a community. Typical species include naked-flower tick-trefoil (*Desmodium nudiflorum*), spotted wintergreen (*Chimaphila maculata*), and Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*). The State Significantly Rare Indian